



SAVING REEFS WORLDWIDE  
EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSERVATION

10/4/2006

Blue Ribbon Task Force  
MLPA Initiative  
Submitted Electronically: [MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov](mailto:MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov)

**RE: Comments on Draft Report on Improving Coordination among State and Federal Agencies with MPA Responsibilities**

Dear Chair Isenberg and Blue Ribbon Task Force members,

The Reef Check Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to the preservation of coral reefs globally and temperate reefs in California through research, education and conservation. Our new California Program educates, trains, and engages all ocean users in the collection of scientifically sound data describing California's nearshore rocky reefs to help inform management decisions and create an informed constituency supportive of science-based management. Over the past 18 months we designed, peer reviewed, and field tested the Reef Check California monitoring protocol and developed a comprehensive set of training and testing materials. We have completed seven training workshops (six on the central coast) and have certified 63 volunteer divers to participate in Reef Check California surveys. We have carried out dozens of presentations and public educational and outreach activities disseminating information on California rocky reef ecosystems to a large number of divers and non-divers alike in our efforts to develop an educated constituency supportive of science-based management. Importantly, participants in our programs have come from all walks of life and we have successfully engaged a diverse cross-section of the public.

Our staff and constituents have been following the MLPA Initiative closely and quickly mobilized to design and conduct surveys specific to the newly approved MPA network on the central coast. Reef Check California divers began surveying the future no-take reserve site at Lover's Point in Monterey a mere five days after the Fish and Game Commission decision on August 15, 2006. Few other monitoring programs in the State have the capacity and flexibility to respond as quickly and efficiently to this far-reaching conservation plan.

We have reviewed the Draft Report on Improving Coordination among State and Federal Agencies with MPA Responsibilities (Report) and request that the Reef Check California Program be added to Appendix D: "Matrix of MPA-Related Institutions and Programs in the Central Coast." Specifically, we feel that our data collection efforts should be noted in Section A. Monitoring and research under Basic biology, Ecology, and Fisheries. In addition, we believe our education and outreach efforts should be noted in Section D. Education and Outreach under Marine resources, and Marine science.

Although in its infancy, the Reef Check California volunteer monitoring program has already collected a substantial amount of subtidal data and reached out to a large and diverse audience. These efforts have been recognized by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) as important in meeting their data collection and monitoring mandates. We are currently in the process of completing a Memorandum of Understanding with DFG formally recognizing our relationship and the utility of the data collected by Reef Check California divers to help inform management decisions. We welcome any suggestion you have to further increase the efficacy of the program and invite you to join us to participate in, or observe, one of our upcoming surveys this fall.

We wish to thank you for your tremendous dedication and hard work on this most important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Craig Shuman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Craig Shuman, D. Env.  
*Director, Reef California Program*